

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 727

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2007

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. AKAKA, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. LOTT, Mr. SMITH, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Ms. SNOWE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Teaching Geography
5 is Fundamental Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION.**

2 Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
3 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
4 the following:

5 **“PART C—GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

6 **“SEC. 231. FINDINGS.**

7 “Congress makes the following findings:

8 “(1) Geographic literacy is essential to a well-
9 prepared citizenry in the 21st Century because geo-
10 graphic factors assume greater importance as the
11 world’s economies, societies, and political structures
12 grow more global in scale.

13 “(2) In a recent National Geographic-Roper 9-
14 country survey of geographic literacy among young
15 adults aged 18 through 24, Americans ranked sec-
16 ond to last. Only 13 percent of young adults aged
17 18 through 24 in the United States were able to cor-
18 rectly identify Iraq on a map of Asia and the Middle
19 East.

20 “(3) The economic stature and competitiveness
21 of the United States requires increasingly sophisti-
22 cated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of
23 geographic tools.

24 “(4) United States Department of Labor data
25 identifies geotechnology as one of the 3 fastest grow-
26 ing employment fields serving industries such as in-

1 surance, banking, real estate, forestry, and agri-
2 culture as well as Federal, State, and local Govern-
3 ments.

4 “(5) The National Academy of Sciences urged
5 creation of a national program to improve the geo-
6 graphic competence of the United States general
7 population and the school age population.

8 “(6) Geography is defined as a ‘core academic
9 subject’ within the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
10 cation Act of 1965 (as amended by the No Child
11 Left Behind Act of 2001).

12 “(7) A recent National Geographic Society sur-
13 vey found that all 50 States and the District of Co-
14 lumbia recognize geography in their curricula or con-
15 tent standards, and an increasing number require
16 geography for graduation and include geography in
17 mandated statewide assessments.

18 “(8) Seven of 10 educators responding to a Na-
19 tional Geographic survey felt their professional de-
20 velopment opportunities in geography were inad-
21 equate and half believed their schools had inad-
22 equate basic materials for teaching geography.

23 “(9) The National Geographic Society has
24 spent over 15 years pioneering an extraordinarily ef-
25 fective national program for improving the teaching

1 of geography by engaging university faculty
 2 geographers and highly trained teachers in State Ge-
 3 ographic Alliances dedicated to providing high qual-
 4 ity professional development opportunities for kin-
 5 dergarten through grade 12 teachers.

6 “(10) More than 60 colleges and universities in
 7 all 50 States have received grants from the National
 8 Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alli-
 9 ances and their professional development programs.
 10 Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12
 11 teachers and their higher education partners conduct
 12 workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and
 13 facilitate communication among thousands of teach-
 14 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-
 15 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

16 “(11) A study by Mid-continent Research for
 17 Education and Learning that assessed student aca-
 18 demic achievement in geography on the National As-
 19 sessment of Educational Progress showed that stu-
 20 dents taught by Alliance-trained teachers out-
 21 performed other students by almost 10 percent.

22 **“SEC. 232. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES.**

23 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to pro-
 24 mote geographic literacy and improved understanding of
 25 global cultures among kindergarten through grade 12 stu-

1 dents by expanding programs that employ the geographic
2 knowledge and expertise of faculty members in institutions
3 of higher education for the benefit of kindergarten
4 through grade 12 teachers and to otherwise advance geo-
5 graphic literacy.

6 “(b) OBJECTIVES.—The objectives of this part are
7 the following:

8 “(1) To increase students’ knowledge of, and
9 achievement in, standards-based geography to enable
10 the students to become better informed and more
11 productive citizens.

12 “(2) To increase the number of highly qualified
13 teachers of United States and world geography and
14 to enable the teachers—

15 “(A) to improve student mastery of geo-
16 graphic principles; and

17 “(B) to increase practical applications of
18 those principles.

19 “(3) To encourage geographic education re-
20 search, to develop and disseminate effective instruc-
21 tional materials, and to promote replication of best
22 practices and exemplary programs that foster geo-
23 graphic literacy.

24 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact
25 of education in geography.

1 “(5) To leverage and expand private and public
2 support for geography education partnerships at na-
3 tional, State, and local levels.

4 **“SEC. 233. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

5 “The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to a
6 national nonprofit education organization or a consortium
7 of national nonprofit education organizations (hereafter in
8 this part referred to as the ‘grantee’) that has as its pri-
9 mary purpose the improvement of the quality of student
10 understanding of geography through effective teaching of
11 geography in the Nation’s classrooms.

12 **“SEC. 234. USE OF FUNDS.**

13 “(a) DIRECT ACTIVITIES.—The grantee shall use not
14 more than 25 percent of the funds made available through
15 the grant for a fiscal year—

16 “(1) to strengthen and expand the grantee’s re-
17 lationships with institutions of higher education and
18 with State and local agencies and other public and
19 private organizations with a commitment to geog-
20 raphy education and the benefits of geography edu-
21 cation;

22 “(2) to support and promote research-based
23 training of teachers of geography and related dis-
24 ciplines in kindergarten through grade 12 as a
25 means of broadening student knowledge of the

world, including the dissemination of information on effective practices and research findings concerning the teaching of geography;

“(3) to support research on effective geography teaching practices and the development of assessment instruments and strategies to document student understanding of geography;

“(4) to convene national conferences on geography education to assess the current state of geographic literacy and to identify strategies for improvement; and

“(5) to develop and disseminate appropriate research-based materials to foster geographic literacy.

“(b) SUBGRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall use not more than 75 percent of the funds made available through the grant for a fiscal year to award subgrants to eligible recipients.

“(2) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT DEFINED.—In this part the term ‘eligible recipient’ means an institution of higher education associated with—

“(A) a State geographic alliance;

“(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

“(C) a State educational agency or local educational agency; or

1 “(D) a partnership between or among an
2 alliance, organization, or agency described in
3 subparagraph (A), (B) or (C).

4 “(3) SUBGRANT USES OF FUNDS.—Eligible re-
5 cipients shall use the subgrant funds for 1 or more
6 of the following purposes:

7 “(A) Conducting teacher training pro-
8 grams that use effective and research-based ap-
9 proaches to the teaching of geography at the
10 kindergarten through grade 12 level.

11 “(B) Applying Geographic Information
12 System (GIS) or other geographic technological
13 tools to the teaching of geography.

14 “(C) Applying Internet and other distance
15 learning technology to the teaching of geography
16 or to the continuing education of teachers.

17 “(D) Promoting rigorous academic stand-
18 ards and assessment techniques to guide and
19 measure student performance in geography.

20 “(E) Promoting research in geography
21 education, emphasizing research that leads to
22 improving student achievement.

23 “(F) Carrying out local, field-based activi-
24 ties for teachers and students to improve their
25 knowledge of the concepts and tools of geog-

1 raphy while enhancing understanding of their
2 home region.

3 “(G) Promoting comparative studies of
4 world cultures, economies, and environments.

5 “(H) Encouraging replication of best prac-
6 tices and model programs to promote geo-
7 graphic literacy.

8 “(I) Developing and disseminating effec-
9 tive, research-based geography learning mate-
10 rials.

11 “(J) Convening State-based conferences to
12 assess the state of geographic literacy and to
13 identify strategies for improvement.

14 **“SEC. 235. APPLICATIONS.**

15 “(a) GRANTEE APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to re-
16 ceive a grant under this part, the grantee shall submit
17 to the Secretary an application at such time, in such man-
18 ner, and accompanied by such information as the Sec-
19 retary may require.

20 “(b) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

21 “(1) SUBMISSION.—To be eligible to receive a
22 subgrant under this part, an eligible recipient shall
23 submit an application to the grantee at such time,
24 in such manner and accompanied by such informa-
25 tion as the grantee may require.

1 “(2) REVIEW.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall in-
3 vite individuals described in subparagraph (B)
4 to review all applications from eligible recipients
5 for a subgrant under this section and to make
6 recommendations to the grantee regarding the
7 approval of the applications.

8 “(B) REVIEWERS.—The individuals re-
9 ferred to in subparagraph (A) are the following:

10 “(i) Leaders in the field of geography
11 education.

12 “(ii) Such other individuals as the
13 grantee may determine are necessary or
14 desirable.

15 **“SEC. 236. REQUIREMENTS.**

16 “(a) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The grantee receiv-
17 ing a grant under this part for a fiscal year, and each
18 eligible recipient receiving a subgrant under this part for
19 a fiscal year, may use not more than 15 percent of the
20 funds made available through the grant or subgrant, re-
21 spectively, for administrative costs.

22 “(b) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible to
24 receive a subgrant under this part an eligible recipi-
25 ent shall agree in the application submitted under

1 section 235(b) to provide matching funds towards
2 the costs of the activities assisted under the
3 subgrant.

4 “(2) AMOUNT.—An eligible recipient shall pro-
5 vide matching funds in an amount equal to 20 per-
6 cent of the subgrant funds received under this part
7 for the second and each succeeding fiscal year for
8 which subgrant payments are made.

9 “(3) SOURCE OF MATCHING FUNDS.—Matching
10 funds may be provided in cash or in kind, fairly
11 evaluated, including facilities, staffing salaries, and
12 educational materials.

13 **“SEC. 237. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

14 “There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
15 this part \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2008 and each of
16 the 4 succeeding fiscal years.”.

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